

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) EIR process for the Merriam Mountains Specific Plan began with the County of San Diego issuance of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR in September 2004. The County of San Diego issued the NOP on September 30, 2004, and distributed it to the state clearinghouse (SCH #20044091166) and federal, state, and local trustees and agencies that may be affected by the proposed project. Public notification of the NOP included direct agency and public notification, newspaper announcements, and posting on the County of San Diego Department of Planning and Land Use (DPLU) website (http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/dplu/ceqa_public_review.html). Twenty-two letters were received during the NOP scoping period (September 30, 2004, to October 29, 2004) from the public and various agencies. The NOP was also available at the San Marcos Branch Library and Escondido Branch Library. A public scoping meeting was held on October 13, 2004, at the Twin Oaks High School.

A Draft EIR including a detailed analysis of impacts to environmental disciplines and an evaluation of alternatives to the proposed project, including the No Project Alternative was circulated for agency and public review on August 31 to October 15, 2007. The Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIR was mailed to interested parties, agencies, city departments, special districts, and property owners and occupants adjacent to the proposed project. A total of 121 copies of the NOA for the Draft EIR were distributed. In addition, 51 electronic copies of the Draft EIR along with 40 hard copies were distributed. A total of 74 electronic sets of appendices and 10 hardcopy sets were also distributed. A newspaper notice, including information on the Draft EIR and the DPLU website where the documents could be downloaded, was printed in the San Diego Union Tribune at the beginning of the public review period on August 30, 2007. The Draft EIR was also available at the San Marcos and Escondido branch libraries and the DPLU Project Processing Counter. One hundred and seven comment letters and a form letter with 277 individual signatures were received.

Subsequent to the Draft EIR being prepared a Draft Recirculated EIR (REIR) was circulated to address comments received during the public review period and changes to the project description. The REIR was recirculated from March 12, 2009, to April 27, 2009.

The NOA of the REIR was mailed to interested parties, agencies, city departments, special districts, commenters that provided comments on the DEIR and property owners and occupants within a 300-foot radius to the proposed project. The NOA included information on how to gain access to the REIR, information on the proposed project, and how to comment on the REIR. The REIR was also available at the San Marcos Branch Library, the Vista Branch Library, and the Escondido Branch Library. One hundred and nine comment letters were received from individuals and various agencies.

A total of 762 copies of the NOA for the REIR were distributed. In addition, 67 electronic copies of the REIR along with 16 hard copies were distributed. A total of 67 electronic sets of appendices and 13 hardcopy sets were also distributed. A newspaper notice, including information on the REIR and the DPLU website where the documents could be downloaded, was printed in the San Diego Union Tribune at the beginning of the public review period on March 12, 2009. The REIR was also available at the San Marcos, Vista, and Escondido branch libraries and the DPLU Project Processing Counter.

The Merriam Mountains Specific Plan Draft EIR (August 2007) as amended and updated by the Recirculated EIR (March 2009), the public comments, the responses to public comments for both the DEIR and the REIR, and the required findings pursuant to CEQA Section 21000 et seq., California Public Resources Code and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA Section 15000 et seq., California Code of Regulations, Title 14 constitute the Final EIR (FEIR) on the proposed project. The FEIR will be used by the County of San Diego as part of its decision-making process.

The focus of the responses to comments is on the disposition of significant environmental issues as raised in the comments, as specified by Section 15088(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. Detailed responses are provided to comments on the merits of the proposed project. However, when a comment is not directed to significant environmental issues, the responses indicate that the comment has been noted for consideration by the decision makers.

This FEIR will be used by the County of San Diego, in conjunction with other information developed in the County of San Diego formal record, to act on the Merriam Mountains Specific Plan. Under CEQA requirements, the County of San Diego will determine the adequacy of this FEIR and, if adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA prior to making a decision on the project.